

Meeting Minutes

OLIVER RANCH CORE GROUP Bureau of Land Management Offices Tuesday, July 19, 2005

The meeting commenced at 10:30 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Kathy August, Blaine Benedict, Bruce Beierle, Paul Buck, Dale Etheridge, Nancy Flagg, Pat Fleming, Laurie Howard, Megan Iudice, Michael Johnson, Jeanne Klockow, Rob Mrowka, Alan O'Neill, Peg Rees, Michael Reiland, Mark Rehszynshyj, Henry Tom, Pamela Vilkin, Les Wallach, Pat Williams, Debbie Wright, Billie Young.

1. Introductions and Announcements

The group welcomed Jeff Wedding from the UNLV Harry Reid Center, Mark Holby of BLM, and Kate Schwarzler from Otak, Inc.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the May 15, 2005, meeting were approved with no changes.

3. Update on NEPA Process

NEPA Committee Chair Michael Johnson and John McCarty of Otak provided an agenda for their presentation (*on file with BLM and UNLV Public Lands Institute*). They provided an overview of the NEPA process and the basic elements of an environmental assessment (EA). The EA is a decision-making tool for the BLM to determine what, if any, actions may be required at the site. There are a minimum of 15 critical elements to a NEPA analysis and 6 basic elements of an EA. Public scoping normally isn't required for an EA, but there are certain projects where issues can be complex and controversial. For this project, the BLM has determined that there will be no formal public scoping, but the final report will likely be made available for public viewing. Alternatives are part of the EA process, including a no action alternative, and mitigations are identified if any impacts are noted. The EA examines multiple potential impacts, including cumulative impacts, and identifies mitigation for any impacts. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is prepared if there are no significant impacts (or significant impacts that can be mitigated) identified; but if there are significant impacts which cannot be mitigated, the agency will move to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Michael noted that at the June 9 NEPA committee meeting there was a request to have Otak provide a timeline for the EA. John McCarty of Otak described the process, which is conducted in two phases. Phase one was a preliminary effort to observe the design meetings held in April 2004 and gain perspective on the issues. Otak then proceeded with surveys of biological and cultural resources on the entire ranch parcel. The firm also conducted a benchmarking report by looking at other similar schools and the issues they had to address. These portions were summarized in a draft report to the BLM, along with a recommendation for three alternatives to be analyzed. After reviewing the draft report, the BLM will then notify Otak if it may proceed with the second phase, which is to conduct the actual EA.

At the last core group meeting, concerns had been expressed about the cultural survey. Michael Johnson introduced Jeff Wedding of the UNLV Harry Reid Center for Environmental Studies to elaborate more on the study that was conducted.

Jeff noted that field surveys of the property were conducted in July 2004. A total of 18 sites were identified, including the original ranch house and structures, wagon roads, fence lines, prehistoric sites, and other historical structures. The field report was submitted to BLM in August 2004 and to the state historical preservation office (SHPO). An agreement between the agencies was reached to begin devising a treatment plan. The plan was finished last month, and BLM now has 30 days to review, followed by another month for SHPO review. Jeff noted that 7 of the 18 sites were determined to be eligible for the National Register, while 11 were deemed not eligible.

Peg Rees asked Jeff to describe what a field survey entails. He said a team of four archaeologists space themselves 30 meters apart, walking back and forth across property lines.

Nancy Flagg asked Jeff to elaborate on what it meant that 7 sites are eligible for the historic register. Jeff replied that 4 criteria determine this, including whether the site is important to themes of the area, whether the site is significant to a person, any significant architecture or artistic element, and whether the site contributes data important to history or prehistory. The BLM ultimately determines whether to nominate any of the sites for the historic register.

Michael Johnson asked Jeff to discuss the cultural treatment plan. Jeff stated that the plan has been submitted to the BLM but is not public at this time because it contains privileged information. At present, the plan may be viewed only by the BLM, SHIPO, and the contractor.

Paul Buck asked if students will ever know where the cultural sites were after they have been mitigated. Jeff said yes and that part of the treatment plan includes interpretive signage and curation of some items at the desert learning center.

Michael Reiland clarified that the 11 cultural sites which were determined not to be eligible will not be ignored. Some sites can be used even if they aren't eligible for the historic register. Billie Young said this could be useful for conveying to the public the cultural history of the area.

Paul Buck asked if the treatment plan addresses ongoing monitoring of cumulative effects and suggested it might be good to involve students in monitoring the condition of archaeological sites. Jeff said they didn't address this as part of their work, but could see it being incorporated into the curriculum.

Peg Rees said she understood the sensitive nature of the findings, but she asked whether it was the site or the location that was considered privileged information. Jeff said that after the treatment plan is approved the locations could probably be identified. Michael Reiland noted that a brief summary of the sites had been provided to the core group last fall, and the general public can request a summary of the original report from Stan Rolf or Susanne Rowe at BLM. A summary of the inventory report will also be included in the EA. Loretta Asay wanted to make sure Jeanne Klockow has the list as she works on the cultural strands of the core curriculum.

Paul Buck asked how long it might be before trails on the property could be determined. Michael Reiland said that as mitigation proceeds after the treatment plan is approved, then Line & Space can be involved. Part of the mitigation will involve building the trails and interpretive sites. Jeff noted they will need another couple weeks after SHPO approval of the treatment plan. It will take 9-12 months to get results back from all outside labs, but he agreed that discussion of trail locations can proceed while this is ongoing.

Peg Rees asked who is deciding what goes on the interpretive signs. Michael said it would be a combination of the curriculum committee, Line & Space Architects, and a contractor that Line &

Space has hired. Peg suggested BLM think about it being an active process for students, using a numbered system rather than a written sign. Loretta Asay asked if there were any issues with placement of buildings vis a vis the findings in the cultural report. Michael said he was not sure.

John McCarty of Otak explained the benchmarking report. The firm looked at Campbell Creek Science School, Gore Range Natural Science School, Islandwood, and Olympic Park Institute. Of those, 3 EAs from the schools are included in the appendices to Otak's draft report. After benchmarking, Otak has reduced the number of elements identified in phase one from 31 to 16: air quality, water, wetlands and riparian, cultural, waste, flood plains, migratory birds, threatened species, invasive species, Native American religious concerns, socio-economic, visual resources, vegetation, transportation, wild horse and burro, and wildlife. John said paleontology is not recommended for further follow-up in phase two of the EA, but BLM has the option to add it back in if they choose to do so.

John provided a timeline for the EA process through June 2006 (*on file with BLM and UNLV Public Lands Institute*) but pointed out that BLM has not had an opportunity to respond to it. Otak anticipates some unresolved issues, with domestic water supply being one of them, because the project has gone from the potential of using a well to using a domestic water supply. Otak is also conducting the EAs for the Red Rock Canyon campground and visitor center projects. They will need to survey the roadway for the water pipeline. The timeline also anticipates the possibility of the EA being challenged in court and, thus, represents a worst case scenario. Otak's goal is to complete the EA in calendar year 2005 if at all possible.

Pam Vilkin asked if it been determined that domestic water will run from Summerlin, and she asked where the additional funding is coming from. Michael noted a request has been made to use funds from the SNPLMA special account reserve (SAR).

Rob Mrowka asked if BLM would consider the participation of the core group in the review of the draft EA report, with public participation after the final report is issued. Michael Johnson pointed out that BLM cannot seek consensus from the core group because of federal FACA guidelines. Given the interest of the core group and its history, Rob suggested it would be good to have a comment period prior to finalization of the draft, rather than solely using the regular public comment period after the final report is submitted. Alan O'Neill concurred that it would be preferable to draw upon the core group during the internal review process.

Paul Buck asked about the architectural alternatives Otak is considering. John said the preferred alternative is represented by the architect's current drawings. Paul asked how the other alternatives are developed and whether the core group will have an opportunity to comment on them. John said this remains to be determined. Otak will acknowledge the "disturbed site" option and analyze it. The EA looks at pros and cons to help understand the nature of the preferred alternative. Michael Johnson said there is no set number of alternatives that must be looked at, but it is always better to look at some alternatives.

Peg Rees asked how Otak and Line & Space work together. John replied that the goal all along is to have an iterative process, but he acknowledged it has not been as smooth as originally desired because of some federal EA rules. Otak did participate in the design meetings held by Line and Space and has met with the architects to share perspectives. When Otak did surveys, Line & Space participated in the nature of the issues but not the specifics. Otak has engaged in exchanges with the Design Oversight Committee. Michael Reiland pointed out that if a major issue was identified, BLM would ensure that appropriate parties were notified.

4. Matrix of Project Concerns & Resolutions

Michael Reiland said he is still finalizing a matrix of the project concerns compiled by the university. He has gone through the resolutions and is now documenting where they occurred. He hopes to have a document ready for the next meeting, which will grow as the project continues and serve as an ongoing tracking mechanism.

5. Review of Project Timeline Schedule

Michael Reiland provided an update on several project issues.

A. Status of Request For Qualifications. BLM has an appointment on July 26 with the new contracting officer in the state office. She has given some indications that a cooperative agreement may be the best vehicle for operation of the center, rather than a concessionaire's agreement. More will be known after the meeting. BLM hopes to issue a Request for Information (RFI) fairly soon, but Michael is also continuing his discussion with personnel at Lake Havasu concerning the concessionaire pathway just in case.

B. Water Options. The BLM held a meeting on July 7 with the Las Vegas Valley Water District to discuss providing water to the campground and visitor center. Initial cost estimates look good. BLM has requested Special Account Reserve funding to bring a municipal water line to the site. The Southern Nevada Water Authority is also interested in partnering with BLM on the desert learning center project. Peg Rees asked about the timeline for running municipal water to the site. Michael said it is about the same as constructing the school -- 2.5 to 3 years. John McCarty said that would fit the current EA timeline, but the need for additional surveys still needs to be determined.

Pam Vilkin suggested that public input might be warranted if taking a water line through a national conservation area. Michael reiterated that the EA doesn't require public scoping. Pam asked about the cost estimate for the water line. Michael said it could range anywhere from \$200,000 to \$1.5 million. Pat Fleming noted the Water District prefers to put the water line under the pavement. Extending it from the visitor center is approximately 6 miles.

Nancy Flagg asked if a general project timeline will be provided to the core group. Michael said he would provide one to the university for distribution to the group.

C. Nevada Power Grid. There is a need to discuss net metering with Nevada Power, but Michael said nothing has happened with this discussion to date. Loretta Asay said she has been working with a group putting in solar panels on CCSD schools, where student can monitor the energy produced. One of the individuals is interested in partnering on the RRDLC project. Michael asked her to get him the contact information. Pam Vilkin suggested contacting Bob Balzar at Nevada Power, and she also suggested talking to the Harry Reid Center at UNLV, which has been very generous with photovoltaics. Michael said he will make sure to contact these individuals to move this issue forward.

6. Curriculum Development

Jeanne Klockow provided an update on the development of the RRDLC core curriculum. She thanked the core group and stakeholders for their help. The essential questions for the wild horse and burro curriculum were shared at the last core group meeting. The expanded curriculum will be presented to the core group and to the curriculum committee after it has been reviewed by the national wild horse and burro representatives in late July.

Jeanne reported that the historical curriculum is now under development. Ten essential questions have been proposed, which she distributed (*on file with BLM and UNLV Public Lands Institute*). She encouraged feedback to be sent to her via email. As the historical curriculum development continues, the goal is to start the cultural strands in early August.

7. Community Outreach

Nancy Flagg provided an update on plans for community outreach activities. The university is working on a presentation to be given in early September to the Clark County School District regional superintendents. The presentation will provide a general overview of the project, including its mission and progress on the center to date. Loretta Asay is also helping to arrange a similar presentation to the school board later in the fall.

Work has also started on a newsletter-style brochure to use as a handout at the CCSD presentations as well as at future public meetings. The newsletter will feature short articles about different aspects of the center, along with the architects' renderings.

Nancy also circulated conceptual drawings of the RRDLC playground that were drawn by students in the Discover Mojave Outdoor World program, another SNPLMA initiative. The students, ages 7-12, were asked to envision desert-themed playground equipment at the center. The drawings will be compiled into a scrapbook for display at public events. Les Wallach suggested adding photos from the dormitory design competition held in 2004.

8. Standing Reports

A. Line and Space Architects

Henry Tom and Les Wallach of Line and Space Architects provided an update on recent activities (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Institute office and BLM office*). He reminded the group that the architects are in the design development stage and expect to be 50% complete by early August. The plans will be reviewed in Las Vegas August 10-11 with the Building Committee and representatives from BLM-Denver. They began review of the drawings in the Building Committee meeting today and will continue this afternoon. Part of this phase includes relooking at the function of each building, how the buildings circulate, and making sure the program is interpreted and the design intent carries through. Design development is slated to be completed by early December.

Nancy Flagg asked about the status of the instructor housing. Henry replied that the instructor housing will be designed and listed as a construction alternative. They are looking at several options – one is to include housing for the maintenance person and the infrastructure for the instructor housing in the base bid. Another option is to break the construction of the housing into two packages of 5 facilities each.

Peg Rees reviewed decisions made at the February 2005 Building Committee after the value analysis had been completed. She expressed concern with a decision to potentially defer construction of instructor housing while fully constructing all dormitories. She suggested reconsideration of the decision in order to establish a balance of students and instructors on site. Les Wallach reminded the group that each dorm has living quarters for chaperones. Peg reiterated the need for trained staff to be onsite for safety reasons. Paul Buck concurred and added it would be a relevant issue to potential operators, because instructor salaries will need to be higher if on-site housing is not provided in their overall compensation.

Peg asked if sleeping quarters in the nurse's station had been cut. Henry Tom said it had been added back in the current drawings. Peg questioned the assumption that the ranch site was too

remote for bicycle commuting, which affects potential LEED points. She also asked whether a Citizens Area Transit bus line could be negotiated. Henry responded that LEED requires two separate bus lines, which is a problem. Peg noted that a LEED point could potentially be gained for alternative transportation, because a study being conducted by UNLV as part of another SNPLMA project will look at hydrogen and electric transportation options. Peg also suggested putting a requirement for green cleaning in the operator's agreement, which would gain another LEED point. Angie Lara asked for follow-up plan for these points, and Line and Space agreed to do so. Pat Fleming pointed out that projects always lose some LEED points when the formal evaluation occurs. Peg agreed and said that for this reason UNLV tries to meet as many possible points as possible on its capital projects.

B. *BLM Capital Improvements*

Mark Rehskynshy provided an update on BLM capital improvements at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. The Red Springs project is winding down and looks great. He thanked Patrick Putnam for his leadership as well as the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association for stepping in to help complete the project.

Meetings of the Visitor Center Core Group are held the second Tuesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. at the Interagency Center. Peg Rees asked if it would be appropriate to have Allison Brody, the project manager of the Environmental Education Strategy, serve on the core group in order to bring that facility into the strategic plan. Michael Reiland said the meetings are open to anyone. The project is currently in schematic design.

9. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

10. Future Meeting Schedule

Michael Reiland reviewed the upcoming meeting dates for the RRDLC Core Group. The group will return to monthly meetings throughout the remainder of 2005, on the third Tuesday of the month:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Tuesday, August 16, 2005	10:30 a.m.	UNLV (Room TBA)
Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2005	10:30 a.m.	BLM Interagency Conference Rooms A-C
Tuesday, October 18, 2005	10:30 a.m.	UNLV (Room TBA)
Tuesday, November 15, 2005	10:30 a.m.	BLM Interagency Conference Rooms A-C

11. New Business

No new business was noted.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.